

Tips on How to Have a Successful PCS Move...

by CPT Desirée Helmick

Moving is a part of life in the military. Unfortunately, moves often involve loss of and/or damage to our household goods during shipment. The Army “personnel” claims system is designed to help service members receive financial reimbursement for such losses, and to ensure that the carrier responsible for the loss or damage is held accountable.

Before the Move

Take a few precautions before the movers pack up your belongings. This is the best time to document what you own. Save receipts, bills, appraisals, high value item inventories, and other proof of ownership. Never ship these documents with your goods. Take pictures or videotape the contents of your home. Make sure that video documentation or the pictures are not packed with your household goods. Carry the documentation with you! Also, before the movers arrive, try to recruit enough help to have one person in each room to monitor the movers. This will help ensure that the movers are packing your belongings properly, and also provide someone to whom the movers can direct any questions they may have.

During the Move

When the movers arrive to pack up your household goods, you should have already decided what items you want packed, what items go in your hold baggage, and what items you will hand-carry. It is imperative to secure valuable or sensitive items where the movers cannot have access to them. Hand-carry small, valuable items with you; however, if you decide to have the movers pack your valuable items, ensure that **each** item is listed separately on the inventory as a high value item. Cash, coin collections, money orders, and “unreasonable” items (*e.g.*, brass knuckles, stun guns) should **never** be shipped in your household goods or hold baggage. You will **not** be paid for these items if they are lost or damaged. If you would like to ship a weapon in your household goods shipment, contact your local transportation or customs office to find out what forms and formalities are required.

When the movers have completed packing and loading your household goods, they will give you an inventory of all your belongings. Check the inventory very carefully to ensure that it is accurate and everything you are shipping is listed on the inventory. The movers should also note preexisting damage to your belongings on the inventory. Check the annotations carefully; if the movers have exaggerated the amount of preexisting damage, you should state your disagreement directly on the inventory in the remarks section. Do not argue with the movers; simply list your disagreement on the inventory form. This will help when it comes time for your claim to be adjudicated.

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When the movers deliver your household goods, make sure they have delivered everything. Have a copy of the inventory on hand and check off the numbers of the boxes as the movers bring them into your new home. If you notice items are missing or damaged, note this on the front of the DD Form 1840 (the so-called "pink form," which is not always pink), which the movers will give to you. Do **not** leave this form blank if you have missing or damaged items. The claims office uses this form to evaluate whether the carrier did a good job. You can also annotate additional damaged or missing items on the back of the pink form (DD Form 1840R) as you finish unpacking your boxes. Also, if you are unhappy with the results of your move, be sure to say so on the customer comment card furnished by the movers; failure to register your displeasure on the card can complicate your efforts to receive reimbursement and the Government's efforts to recover from a carrier for loss or damage.

After the Move

You have **70 days after the date of delivery** to turn in your pink form to your local claims office. **This is not filing your claim.** You are simply putting the carrier on notice that you will file a claim. You have **two years from the date of delivery** in which to file your claim against the Government. However, if you miss the 70-day deadline for filing the pink form you will not be paid for your lost or damaged items unless you can show good cause for missing the deadline. Good cause is generally considered to include extended TDY, deployment, emergency leave, or severe illness **and** you do not have a spouse or friend to whom you can give a power of attorney allowing that person to file the pink form on your behalf.

If you decide to file your claim directly against the carrier under the Full Replacement Value program, you have **75 days from the date of delivery** to fax or mail your DD Form 1840/1840R to the carrier listed in block 9 of that form, and **only nine months** to file your claim against the carrier. For more information on the Full Replacement Value program, see the related story on page 5.

Conclusion

The Army personnel claims system is designed to help you; however, you also have a responsibility to protect yourself. If you keep proper records of what you own and promptly document damages that occur during the move, you will improve your chances of obtaining the best possible settlement, whether you decide to file your claim against the Government or go directly against the carrier under the new Full Replacement Value Program. If you have questions, your local claims office can provide the answers.

The Kaiserslautern Claims Office is located in Building 3210 on Kleber Kaserne. Appointments are required to file claims; however, walk-in appointments are available from 0900-1530 on Wednesdays (closed for lunch 1200-1300). Office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 0900-1200 and 1300-1600 and Thursday afternoon 1300-1600. You can also call the Claims Office at DSN 483-8414 or CIV 0631-411-8414. The Claims Office is closed on Federal and Training Holidays.